

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY WARSAW

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

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AMCONSUL MILAN

AMCONSUL NAPLES

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 9473

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, UR, IT

SUBJECT: GROMYKO'S VISIT TO ITALY

GENEVA FOR CSCE DEL

GENEVA FOR SALT II

VIENNA FOR MBFR DELEGATION

REF: A. ROME 8322 (NOTAL)

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SUMMARY. DURING TWO DAYS OF TALKS WITH ITALIAN LEADERS,

SOVIET FOREIGN MINISTER GROMYKO STRESSED THE NEED TO IMPROVE BILATERAL POLITICAL RELATIONS, SOUGHT ITALIAN SUPPORT FOR THE CONVENING OF THE THIRD STAGE OF CSCE, CRITICIZED THE STEP BY STEP APPROACH TOWARD THE RESOLUTION OF THE MIDDLE EAST IMPASSE, AND SUPPORTED BREZHNEV'S CALL FOR MOVES TO CURB DEVELOPMENT OF NEW TYPES OF ARMAMENTS. GROMYKO MET WITH ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY (PCI) OFFICIALS BUT REFUSED TO BE DRAWN OUT PUBLICLY CONCERNING THE RECENT ELECTION RESULTS. END SUMMARY.

1. SOVIET FOREIGN MINISTER GROMYKO PAID A THREE DAY VISIT TO ROME (JUNE 26-29) AT THE INVITATION OF THE ITALIAN GOVERNMENT IN THE FRAMEWORK OF A BILATERAL PROTOCOL ON POLITICAL CONSULTATIONS SIGNED IN 1972. THE PROTOCOL PROVIDES FOR SEMI-ANNUAL TALKS AT THE FOREIGN MINISTER LEVEL; THE LAST SUCH MEETING OCCURRED IN JULY 1974 WHEN THE THEN FOREIGN MINISTER MORO VISITED MOSCOW.

2. IN ADDITION TO FOREIGN MINISTER RUMOR, GROMYKO MET WITH PRESIDENT LEONE AND PRIME MINISTER MORO. A FOREIGN MINISTRY SOURCE, WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE DRAFTING OF THE FINAL JOINT COMMUNIQUE, READ TO US THE MFA'S SUMMARY OF THE GROMYKO-RUMOR TALKS AND PROVIDED BACKGROUND ON THE OFTEN DIFFICULT NEGOTIATIONS INVOLVED IN ACHIEVING AN AGREED TEXT FOR THE COMMUNIQUE. THE PRINCIPAL POINTS OF DISCUSSION BETWEEN THE TWO MINISTERS WERE AS FOLLOWS.

3. CSCE. GROMYKO URGED THAT THE FINAL STAGE OF CSCE BE HELD IN JULY, AND SOUGHT ITALIAN ASSISTANCE IN ACHIEVING THIS GOAL. BOTH IN PRIVATE TALKS WITH RUMOR AND AT A PRESS CONFERENCE, GROMYKO ATTACKED COUNTRIES WHO PLACE OBSTACLES IN THE PATH OF A SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION OF CSCE. HE IMPLIED THAT THE FOOT DRAGGING OF SOME WESTERN NATIONS, BY IMPLICATION THE EC-9 AMONG OTHERS, STRENGTHENED THOSE NEUTRAL COUNTRIES WHO CONTINUED TO HINDER PROGRESS AT GENEVA.

4. FINDING ACCEPTABLE LANGUAGE FOR THE CSCE SECTION OF THE COMMUNIQUE WAS DIFFICULT AND WAS ONLY RESOLVED DURING A FINAL RUMOR-GROMYKO MEETING AT A RECEPTION HOSTED AT THE SOVIET EMBASSY JUNE 28. THE SOVIETS WANTED LANGUAGE SIMILAR

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TO THAT IN THE RECENT SOVIET-BELGIAN COMMUNIQUE; THE ITALIANS BALKED AT THIS AS BEING TOO OPTIMISTIC AND NOTED THAT IF THE SOVIETS PRESSED ALONG THIS LINE, THE CHOICE WOULD EITHER BE A COMMUNIQUE WITH NO MENTION OF CSCE OR NO COMMUNIQUE AT ALL. THE FINAL AGREED LANGUAGE CALLS FOR ALL PARTIES TO WORK FOR THE COMPLETION OF THE SECOND PHASE IN A MANNER WHICH WOULD PERMIT THE FINAL PHASE OF THE CONFERENCE TO TAKE PLACE AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL BY THE END OF JULY.

5. MBFR. IN THE TALKS, GROMYKO TOOK THE STANDARD SOVIET LINE AGAINST BALANCED FORCE REDUCTIONS AND THE COMMON CEILING. HE INDICATED TO RUMOR THAT THE US HAS HINTED IT MIGHT BE IN FAVOR OF INCLUDING THE DISCUSSION OF NUCLEAR WARHEADS WITHIN THE FRAME WORK OF MBFR.

6. THE MIDDLE EAST. GROMYKO DESCRIBED THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST AS BEING "COMPLEX AND DANGEROUS." HE CRITICIZED TO RUMOR (REPEATED TO JOURNALISTS AT A PRESS CONFERENCE) THE STEP BY STEP APPROACH TOWARD AN OVERALL SOLUTION CLAIMING THAT PARTIAL MEASURES MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT TO REACH A GENERAL RESOLUTION. HE CONFIRMED THE SOVIET COMMITMENT TO THE GENEVA CONFERENCE AS THE BEST METHOD OF REACHING A FINAL SETTLEMENT OF ALL THE OUTSTANDING DISPUTES. THE ITALIAN AND SOVIET POSITIONS WERE SO DIVERSE THAT THE COMMUNIQUE LACKED MENTION OF THE RIGHT OF THE PALESTINIANS TO A NATIONAL HOME-LAND. THE COMMUNIQUE, INTER ALIA, CALLS FOR ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL FROM OCCUPIED TERRITORY, RECOGNITION OF THE LEGITIMATE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINE PEOPLE, AND THE GUARANTEED RIGHT TO EXIST AND TO DEVELOP OF ALL THE STATES IN THE REGION.

7. DISARMAMENT. GROMYKO DREW ATTENTION TO BREZHNEV'S CALL IN HIS JUNE 13 SPEECH FOR THE ADOPTION OF MEASURES DESIGNED TO CURB THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW AND MORE DESTRUCTIVE TYPES OF WEAPONS. GROMYKO SUGGESTED AN ENLARGED DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE IN WHICH ALL COUNTRIES COULD TAKE PART. HE CRITICIZED UNNAMED COUNTRIES FOR ADVOCATING A POLICY OF DETENTE ON THE ONE HAND WHILE INCREASING THEIR DEFENSE BUDGETS AT THE SAME TIME. HE ALSO ATTACKED "HIGH LEVEL" OFFICIALS WHO PUBLICLY TALK OF THE USE OF TACTICAL WEAPONS.

8. THE ITALIANS FOUND THE SOVIET WORDING IN MOSCOW'S
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PROPOSED COMMUNIQUE TEXT INTRIGUING AND NEW. IT HAD THE NATURE OF AN APPEAL TO ALL STATES TO STOP THE ARMS RACE IN THE INTEREST OF AVOIDING THE HORRORS OF A TERRIBLE WAR.
(MFA WILL PROVIDE EMBASSY WITH THE SOVIET WORDING WHICH WE WILL FORWARD TO WASHINGTON.

9. BILATERAL RELATIONS. GROMYKO STRESSED THE NEED TO IMPROVE BILATERAL POLITICAL RELATIONS WHICH HAVE NOT DEVELOPED, IN THE SOVIET VIEW, AT THE SAME PACE AS ECONOMIC AND COMMERCIAL RELATIONS. DURING THE VISIT A PROTOCOL ON THE PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND AN AGREEMENT ON ECONOMIC COOPERATION FOR THE PERIOD 1975-1979 WERE SIGNED. AN EXCHANGE OF LETTERS ON ECONOMIC, TECHNICAL AND INDUSTRIAL COOPERATION FOR THE NEXT TEN YEARS ALSO TOOK PLACE.

10. VISITS. THE FINAL COMMUNIQUE NOTED THAT PRESIDENT LEONE WILL VISIT THE USSR IN THE FALL AND THAT FOREIGN MINISTER RUMOR WILL TRAVEL TO MOSCOW LATER THIS YEAR FOR FURTHER CONSULTATIONS. (OUR SOURCE STATED THAT IT HAS BEEN AGREED INFORMALLY THAT LEONE'S TRIP WILL TAKE PLACE IN THE SECOND HALF OF NOVEMBER.) NO MENTION WAS MADE OF A POSSIBLE BREZHNEV VISIT TO ITALY WHICH HAS LONG BEEN IN THE CARDS.

11. EEC. THE SUBJECT OF THE EEC FIGURED ONLY MARGINALLY IN THE TALKS. GROMYKO NOTED THAT THE USSR ACKNOWLEDGES THE EXISTENCE OF THE COMMUNITY. ACCORDING TO OUR SOURCE, THE ONLY SPECIFIC POINT GROMYKO RAISED WAS WHETHER THE EVOLUTION TOWARDS ECONOMIC INTEGRATION WOULD DAMAGE ECONOMIC RELATIONS WITH THIRD COUNTRIES.

12. COMMENT. FROM OUR VANTAGE POINT, IT APPEARS THAT THE NEED FOR A WESTERN FORUM TO PUSH THEIR EFFORT TO CONVENE THE FINAL CSCE STAGE BY THE END OF JULY FIGURED PROMINENTLY IN GROMYKO'S DECISION TO VISIT ROME AT THIS TIME. FURTHERMORE, THE SOVIETS MAY HAVE WISHED TO MAKE AMENDS FOR THEIR INABILITY TO PRODUCE BREZHNEV FOR A VISIT WHILE ALSO STRENGTHENING THEIR RELATIONS WITH THE GOVERNMENT WHICH WILL HAVE THE REINS OF THE EEC FOR THE NEXT SIX MONTHS.

13. AT THE SAME TIME, THE VISIT PROVIDED THE SOVIETS WITH A CONVENIENT OPPORTUNITY TO TEST THE ITALIAN POLITICAL
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CLIMATE. GROMYKO MET WITH SENIOR PCI OFFICIALS, INCLUDING PARTY SECRETARY BERLINGUER, AT THE END OF THE RECEPTION HOSTED BY THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR FOR "LONG AND CORDIAL TALKS" WHICH INVOLVED "AN EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION AND OF OPINIONS ON PROBLEMS OF RECIPROCAL INTEREST." (L'UNITA) AT HIS PRESS CONFERENCE, GROMYKO REFUSED TO BE DRAWN INTO A DISCUSSION OF ITALIAN DOMESTIC AFFAIRS. A SENIOR OFFICIAL OF THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES INFORMED US THAT GROMYKO, ACCORDING TO REPORTS HE HEARD, COUNSELED THE PCI TO PROCEED WITH GREAT PRUDENCE IN THE WAKE OF THEIR ELECTORAL SUCCESS. VOLPE

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